

## STEAMSHIP MEN MAY DISSOLVE THEIR POOL

Contracts Between Members  
Soon Expire and Prosecutions  
Hold Off Renewals.

READY TO LET RATES GO

Atlantic Conference Willing, It Is  
Said, to Cancel Agreements if  
Trial of Suits Is Not Forced.

Officials of the big steamship lines in this city belonging to the Atlantic Conference, which is now being prosecuted by the United States Government under the Sherman anti-trust law, are wondering what is going to happen next month, when the contracts between them giving the rates of cabin and steerage passage expire.

These contracts are signed for three years, and it has been customary as the expiration of the term draws near to hold conferences in London or Paris, to decide what changes are to be made in rates. So far no notices have been issued regarding a conference, and it is considered probable here that the contracts will not be renewed until the result of the action taken by the Government has been made known.

Agents and officials of the lines were willing to talk yesterday with a TIMES reporter on the subject, but they did not wish to be quoted at such a critical period. A report, which was said to have emanated from London, was circulated in shipping circles to the effect that the Atlantic Conference would cancel its contracts with a view to settling the dispute as regards the legality of its business methods, and preventing the suit from coming to trial.

A steamship manager said this:  
"I do not think there is any truth in the report concerning the cancellation of the contracts. It is possible that the newspapers on the other side have got the word cancellation confused with expiration."

"Although I have not received any news from Europe regarding the future actions of the Atlantic Conference I do not think it likely that any contracts will be renewed while the matter is pending in the courts. The Conference offered last Spring to cancel its agreements if the United States Government considered them illegal."

"During the last three years there has been considerable new tonnage added to the Atlantic passenger trade, and this year it will be further augmented by the Olympic and Titanic. This means that before any new contract could be signed there will have to be, perhaps, four or five meetings in London or Paris to adjust the rates for the older ships and fix the fares of the new ships coming out this year and also for the Hamburg-American liner Europa and the 26,000-ton Canarder, which are under construction. Notices for these meetings should have been issued by this time if they were to be held in the near future, as representatives are sent from this side to take part in the discussions."

"Do you think that a rate war will ensue if the contracts are not renewed?" he was asked.

"Not necessarily, as the various lines are on the most amicable footing and there is no reason why the rates should not remain as they are. Fighting each other would be a suicidal policy."

Another manager explained that the rates for passage twenty-eight years ago were higher than they are to-day with less than 10 per cent. of the comfort on board ship. The books of the lines would demonstrate that they made more money, he said, for the first fifteen years of that twenty-eight than they have since. The recent big ships added to the Atlantic fleet, including the Lusitania, Mauretania, Olympic, and Titanic, averaged nearly \$12,000,000 each, which was an enormous outlay in any business, and especially when it was taken into consideration that ships began to depreciate in value from the time of their maiden voyage. Twenty-eight years ago the rate for saloon passengers was \$12.50 minimum, inside or outside cabin. There was no second cabin, and the steerage rates were \$40, without bedding.

The dining saloons were illuminated with oil lamps and the staterooms with candles. In view of the great difference between liners like the Alaska, Arizona, Gallia, Britannic, Spain, City of Chester, Mauretania, Kronprinzessin Cecilie, Adriatic, Kaiserin Auguste Victoria, Provence, Rotterdam, and Minnewaska and other liners of the present day, there was nothing exorbitant, he thought, in the average charge of \$12.50 to \$125 minimum saloon and from \$50 to \$85 for steerage rates without comparing the food, comfort, and general equipment of the modern floating hotels over the crack liners of a quarter of a century ago.

Steamship Men May Dissolve Their Pool:  
Contracts Between Members Soon Expire

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